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Kitchen Nightmare

COVID cases are surging.
Temperatures are dropping.
Government aid is gone. So...
why would anyone open a
restaurant right now?



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KITCHEN NIGHTMARE

COVID cases are surging. Temperatures are dropping. Government aid is gone. So... why would anyone open a restaurant right now?

By Emily Cassel

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CITY PAGES ONLINE www.citypages.com

OFFICE HOURS Monday-Friday

8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

ISSN 0744-0456. City Pages is published weekly by Star Tribune Media Company, LLC. City Pages is located at 650 3rd Ave. S., Ste. 1300, Minneapolis, MN 55488. City Pages is available free of charge, limited to one copy per reader. Additional copies of the current issue may be purchased at the City Pages office for \$1, payable in advance. No person may, without prior written permission of City Pages, take more than one copy of each City Pages weekly issue. Subscriptions are available for \$100 per year. Subscription orders must include check or money order payable to City Pages, and should be mailed to City Pages Subscriptions, 650 3rd Ave. S., Ste. 1300, Minneapolis, MN 55488. Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota. Postmaster: Send address changes to City Pages, 650 3rd Ave. S., Ste. 1300, Minneapolis, MN 55488.

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THE SHORTLIST



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THE STAT SHEET

600

Minimum COVID-19 cases linked to Minnesota weddings since June

6,590

U.S. pedestrian deaths in 2019, the highest figure in three decades

126,524

Absentee ballots received in Minneapolis Monday, putting the city on track for record turnout

7%

COVID testing positivity rate in Minnesota, indicating wide spread

“Third-highest Twitch streaming event of all time, from what I’ve heard.”

Reader Justino De La Noche responds to “Ilhan Omar played Among Us, and honestly? Pretty sus” at citypages.com.

NON-MAGIC NUMBERS

UNTIL THIS WEEK, CDC guidance suggested that “close contact” as it refers to COVID transmission occurred if you were within six feet of an infectious person for 15 straight minutes. Now the center says even brief contact can cause transmission—as little as 15 minutes over a 24-hour period. The new number is an acknowledgement that this virus spreads easily and quickly, but here’s the thing: Most in public health have been clear that there is absolutely nothing magic about six feet for social distancing. The number 15 isn’t magic either; these are rough estimates based on emerging evidence.

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NO THANKS

On second thought, Minnesota doesn't need to 'protect election polls' from 'the antifas'

Voting this year is stressful enough, without wondering if a bunch of armed ex-military types are going to be hanging around your polling place.

Until last week, that seemed like a possibility for Minnesotans, thanks to Atlas Aegis, a Tennessee-based security firm run by U.S. military veterans.

A couple of weeks ago, the company posted a listing through a defense industry jobs site for "security positions in Minnesota during the November Election and beyond." A "large contingent" of recruits was supposed to head to Minnesota to "protect election polls, local businesses, and residents from looting and destruction."

In a subsequent interview, company founder Anthony Caudle told the Washington Post his firm was retained by "a consortium of business owners and concerned citizens" in Minnesota, though he didn't get

much more specific. That group had hired a firm in Minnesota as a contractor, and Atlas Aegis was responsible for recruiting security staff.

"They're for protection, that's it," he said. "They're there to make sure that the antifas don't try to destroy the election sites."

When the Post contacted state and city officials, they said they hadn't even heard of Atlas Aegis, but did not like the sound of this plan.

It's illegal in Minnesota for pretty much anyone other than voters and election staff to be within 100 feet of polling places... or possibly even farther, if you happen to be armed. Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison said such interference was "unnecessary" and "not welcome."

Last week, Ellison announced his office had launched an investigation into Atlas Aegis. By Friday, the company confirmed it will not provide private security at or

near polling places in conjunction with the election.

As part of a settlement, the company admitted a few more details. It claimed that a Minnesota security company had sought officers to work at its clients' private property around the election, but never indicated the work would involve security at or near polling places.

Rather, "of its own accord, without the prompting or knowledge of its industry contacts or the prime security contractor," Atlas Aegis advised that the scope of work included security "to protect election polls," a statement from Ellison's office says. Caudle reportedly "misunderstood" the potential scope of the work, and had "no direct information to suggest that Minnesota election officials or... law enforcement were aware" any of this was happening.

Atlas Aegis also acknowledged its statements to the Post were "incorrect." None



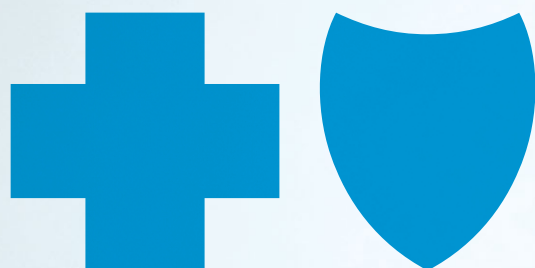
ALEX KORMANN, STAR TRIBUNE

of its officers or employees or contractors will be present in the state in November, let alone providing security detail.

"I'm holding Atlas Aegis to account for their misstatements about recruiting security for polling places in Minnesota that potentially frightened Minnesota voters," Ellison said in a statement. "They won't be doing it again and will not be anywhere in Minnesota before, during, or after Election Day."

Election Day is November 3. For more information about getting your ballot cast, visit the Minnesota Secretary of State's website and look up your polling place.

—HANNAH JONES



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KITCHEN NIGHTMARE

COVID cases are surging. Temperatures are dropping. Government aid is gone. So... why would anyone open a restaurant right now? — **EMILY CASSEL**



I. THE OMEN

Even in a “normal” year, the days just before a restaurant opens are among the most stressful. For Eric Foster, that was early and mid-March. He was readying to open East Side Bar, the reincarnation of the much-loved Ward 6 in St. Paul. After about a year of planning, they’d finally gotten around to mock service and staff

training. Friends and family members were coming to eat.

It was stressful and hectic in all the usual ways, and in some 2020-specific ones. As Foster handled the inevitable small- and medium-sized fires leading up to day one, there was also the understanding that something terrible was on the horizon. COVID cases were spreading and creeping closer to Minnesota. Guests who planned on coming in had been canceling reservations out of fear for their health. ESB made some relatively simple

modifications to try to ensure safety, and hoped for the best.

Then they opened to the public—on the precise day Governor Walz shut down restaurants.

“I don’t think I’m alone—I think this is where we all were mentally—it seemed like this was something that was going to happen, and it was going to shut everything down for a week or two, and then things would go back to normal,” Foster says now. “In retrospect it’s like... how did we even twist ourselves into believing that was possible?”

A valid question! And yet, ESB is one of dozens of restaurants and takeout spots and delivery joints and “ghost kitchens” and pop-ups that have debuted since COVID shut down Minnesota bars and restaurants in March, and more are being announced all the time. Rosalia Pizza. Nashville Coop. Taste of Rondo. Billy Sushi. Petite León. The list goes on.

It begs the question... why?

COVID cases are surging and temperatures are dropping to the kind of patio-season-ending cold even industrial heaters



and lined leggings can't make pleasant. Government aid is gone, and there's an infinitesimal chance of another stimulus package for restaurants going through. Americans are still out of work and reticent to risk eating out—for reasons fiscal and viral. There is, in the background of everything, the chance that another shutdown is coming. Why would any person decide to open a restaurant right now?

II. NO, SERIOUSLY

We started by asking Brian Ingram this very question. Because that guy's opened not one but two since COVID hit.

Ingram revived the Happy Gnome in St. Paul after it closed last year. Reborn as "the Gnome," it's been up and running in Cathedral Hill since early August. Meanwhile, at Keg and Case Market, he and Justin Sutherland (the chef behind Handsome Hog, which also made a move from Lowertown to bigger Cathedral Hill digs during COVID) opened Woodfired Cantina in the anchor restaurant space that previously hosted In Bloom.

"I have the smallest IQ of everybody, I think is what it is," Ingram laughs.

Maybe, but if so, he's in good company. Take the new Northeast tortilleria Nixta, which wouldn't exist if the pandemic didn't.

"COVID hit, and we were out of work, so we started making dinners for friends," chef Gustavo Romero and the folks behind "Team Tortilla" tell CP by email. "A familiar kitchen came up for rent, so we saw an

opportunity to do what we were doing, on a larger scale, and with the help of friends and family, jumped on it." Nixta opened in June.

Their concept is a little bit different; Nixta trades in pre-order pickup dinners and sells tortillas. But they say demand has steadily increased—even during COVID. "We're mindful of the times: There is a need for economical and accessible meals, and that's our model."

In south Minneapolis, Coastal Seafoods also saw a pandemic business boom. Marketing director Keane Amdahl says they had a feeling a lockdown was coming, and to prepare, switched to a curbside ordering model before the official stay-at-home order started. At the same time, the tiny, decades-old seafood shop was about to move into a much bigger footprint not far from their existing Seward location, where they'd have a market *and* a cafe *and* a school (not a fish joke) where folks could take classes on oceanic eats.

"It's funny, but going curbside really showed us how many more people we were able to help," Amdahl says. They no longer needed to work within the physical space constraints of the store, which "actually helped us to grow our business during COVID and highlighted the need for [a] new, bigger location."

They planned to open the expanded space in August well before COVID hit, and the pandemic made it clear they had to push forward "to better and more safely accommodate our customers."

At Nixta and at Coastal, there's been



Kate and Gustavo Romero of Nixta

some need to adapt—though not by much.

"Our model was born in COVID, so those constraints were a known variable," Team Tortilla says. There are small acquiescences: Despite an impulse to want to make "everything," they realize a heat-and-eat system works best for their meals. (Fish tacos and tlaxidas, while delicious, just don't make it far by car.) The creative balance is in making uncompromising food that also doesn't force the customer to do too much on their end.

The Coastal crew "had to rethink the cafe, as we couldn't reasonably accommodate indoor dining," which meant structuring the menu toward items that were easy to prepare for takeout but still highlighted their original idea: tying everything back to the store. Amdahl says they're set up in such a way that—in an eventual future in which COVID doesn't impact everything about daily life—they can expand and switch up their menu.

Ingram, too, seems unnervingly calm about all of this—though one thing he has going for him is timing. He'd started pursuing the Happy Gnome almost as soon as he heard it closed last year, but when COVID hit in earnest he hadn't yet signed a lease on the space.

"I think the one thing COVID did was it pushed landlords," he says. "The only reason I've done two restaurants is landlords now have to work with small, independent guys like me."

Smaller restaurateurs typically don't have the resources to personally guarantee giant spaces (like, say, the Gnome's two-

story, 130-year-old firehouse complete with big-ass parking lot). "We don't have, frankly, the credit history that all these large corporations have."

Two things have changed financially since the pandemic: Banks aren't as insistent on having a personal guarantee, and landlords are willing to negotiate percentage-based leases. Per Ingram: "I think most of us are negotiating percentage-rent-only deals now. So if the government shut us down and we weren't able to open at 25 percent occupancy or 50 percent occupancy, if you're percentage-rent only, then your rent will fluctuate with that."

That doesn't mean you can skate on by for eternity without putting down a penny, but you can get a more favorable deal, and without losing everything you worked your whole life for. "Because most of the time when you do personal guarantees as a small restaurateur, you're putting your house up, you're putting your kids' college education up. You're going all in."

It takes a long time to get a restaurant going, and for many, opening during COVID wasn't a choice, but a necessity. "It shouldn't, in most cases, be seen as an act of opportunity—no matter how creative the service model!—but rather survival," Team Tortilla told us. "Sure, banks and landlords are giving crazy deals (we got none of those, sadly), but isn't that exactly *because* it is supremely difficult to work and succeed in this environment?"

Ingram says the same. Yes, he's getting approached by banks offering wild downtown discounts ("three years rent-free!")



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after owners have foreclosed on buildings. They don't want an empty property just sitting there with no power or gas or heat running and pipes breaking as they go into winter. They simply want a body in the building.

"It's something you would dream of getting—you would never, ever get that," Ingram says. "But there's nobody going out to eat. Still, you would lose money, and your staff would lose money, so there's no point in doing it."

"It's really scary when you get those calls and people are willing to do that," he continues. "Those actually don't build confidence. They make me super scared. Then I really do think I'm the stupid one."

III. IT AIN'T GOOD OUT THERE

Folks who own restaurants aren't usually keen to open their books for outsiders—even (or perhaps especially) for nosy CP writers. Whether due to propriety or privacy or pride or a general sense that it's, uh, not your business, buddy, the tendency is to keep that stuff to yourself.

But Tristan Jimerson has never really ascribed to that financial obfuscation—and hey, he doesn't own a restaurant anymore anyway, after making the call to close Taco

Cat in September on account of COVID safety and other pandemic-adjacent considerations.

Jimerson says they started their bike-delivery taco business with \$10,000, and tried never to get too far in debt after that. Still, each winter, as Minneapolis residents hunkered down, they'd wind up "about \$60,000 in the hole." It's money they can usually make back in the summer with their food truck and their State Fair stall—neither of which were up and running

this year on account of COVID. Sure, they could take out a loan to get through the winter... but that's assuming things will be "normal" come March or April.

"We look at the writing on the wall and see what's being handled at the state and federal level, and go: We're not getting any bailouts. That's never happening for restaurants," Jimerson says. "We're not getting any help from the fucking federal government. And the way that the public has reacted to wearing masks and social

distancing—it's not going to work for us. And I don't think it's going to work for a lot of places."

Again, this is a bike-delivery taco service whose only physical footprint was inside Midtown Global Market. No big dining room, relatively small staff, fairly minimal overhead—about as streamlined an operation as you could have.

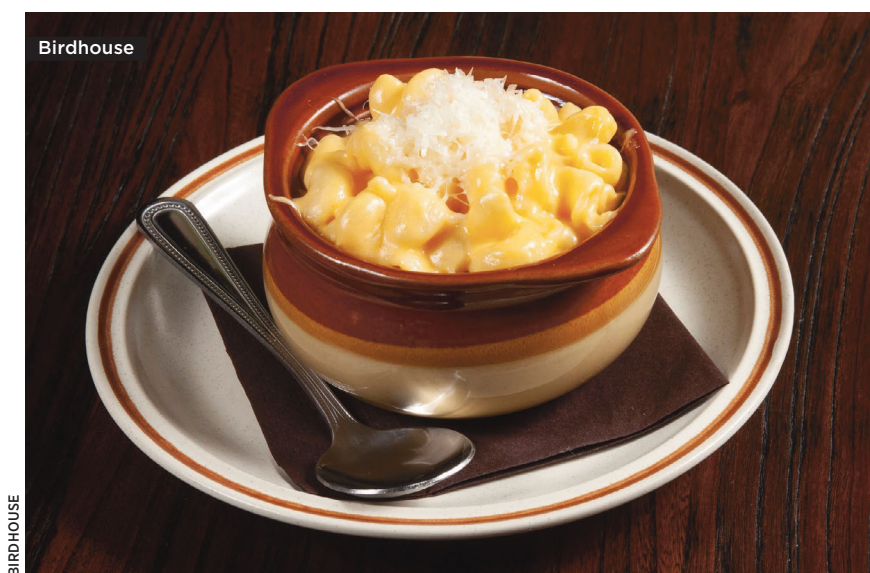
"I think there will be a great boom in the restaurant industry, and there's going to be a lot of really wonderful things," Jimerson says. "But [first] I think what it's going to be is an ice age-level extinction."

Not everyone got to take advantage of smokin' real estate deals—before or after the pandemic—but it seems especially tough for folks who had a lease before it hit. Particularly those who signed one just before it hit.

Joshua and Nell Currey Dykhuis, the couple behind the newly opened Birdhouse in Robbinsdale, inked their deal last Halloween. Demolition on the space started in late January, and they opened on August 3.

"By the time restaurants were completely shut down, we were already financially invested—lease signed, loan money disbursed," Josh says. "Giving up just wasn't an option. We put our heads down and worked."

"We are finding it almost impossible



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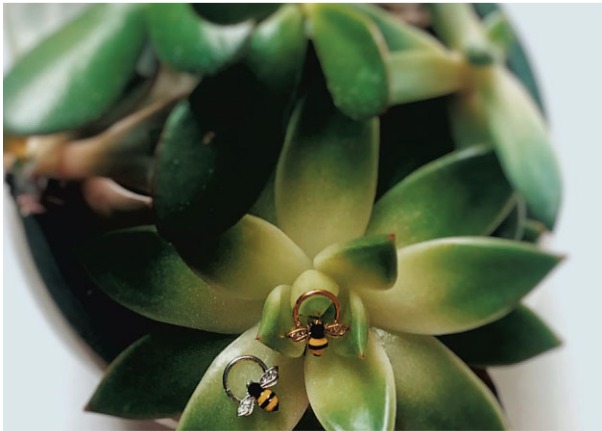
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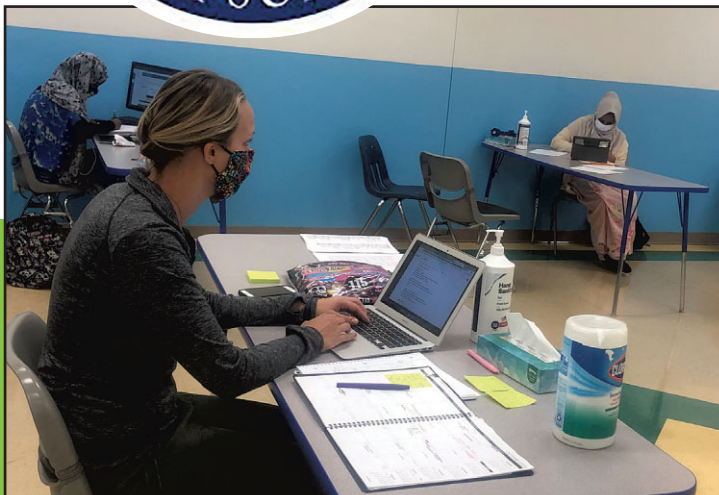
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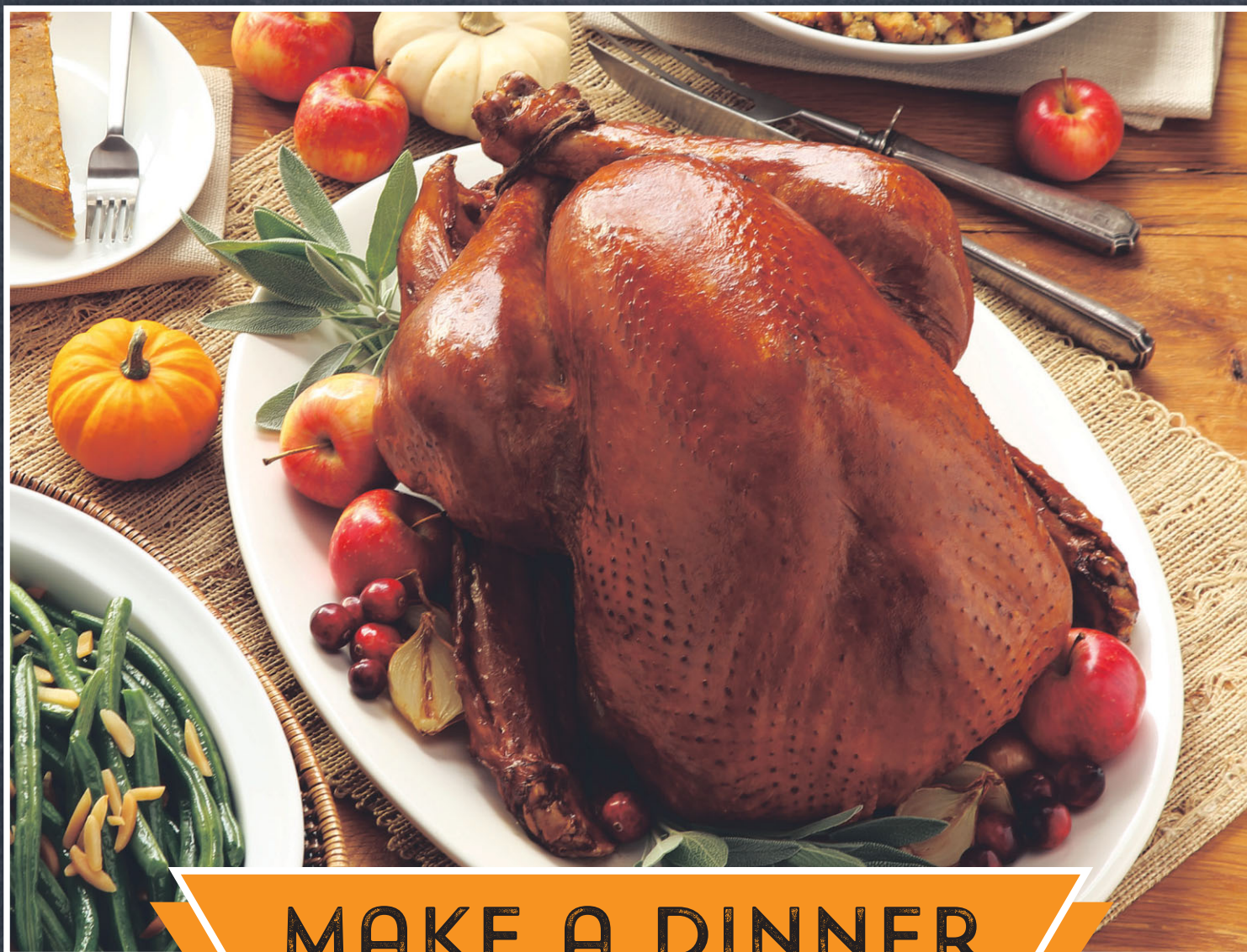
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to get much financial help right now,” adds Nell. They had to start paying rent in February, even though their opening was pushed back a few months. Like many other new restaurants, they don’t qualify for grant funding—through the county or SBA—because to do so, they need to show sales prior to January 15 of this year. And being at 50 percent capacity without the bar crowds they anticipated has made sales goals hard to reach.

As for how it’s going for Eric Foster and the crew over at ESB since their opening and immediate closing?

“In a word, terrible. Really fucking terrible,” Foster says. He guesses they’re doing 20 to 30 percent of the business he’d expect in a typical year. And though they’ve tried lots of things with varying degrees of success—food-for-four family dinners, to-go cocktail kits, special events—it’s only been marginally helpful.

Which again, brings us back to the question of why a person would go through with this now, knowing what we do about the pandemic and the extreme lack of an end in sight.

It’s a question Union Hmong Kitchen’s Yia Vang has been asking himself. Vang is currently working to open Vinai in Northeast—a celebration of Hmong cooking and the family recipes he grew up eating.

“For me, it gave me this gut check of: Why do you want to do this?” Vang says. “In the midst of COVID, a smart person

would not be doing this, you know? Is this like, an ego thing? I really had to check my why.”

What he came back to was: family. Specifically, his parents.

“What motivates me is their journey from a war-torn country, my dad fighting in that war, my parents getting us here. What drove me is that idea of: They’ve been through so much,” Vang says. Family is at the core of everything he’s doing at Vinai—it was before the pandemic hit and it is now. “What am I willing to go through? What am I willing to stress about to make sure that people hear that story?”

Josh says they have a few good reasons not to give up, but at the end of the day? “I couldn’t disappoint our family.” One of their toddlers’ first words was “Birdhouse,” and their oldest works there four nights a week. (And “We can’t forget Nana, the plant stylist.”)

“Nell and I worked together last Friday night and were the last to leave,” Josh says. “We sat in the empty restaurant and had a drink, and it was one of the happiest moments of my life.”

But Nell adds: “After this first full cold week without patio seats, we are seeing how challenging this winter will be. This is nothing like the business plan the Birdhouse was created with.”

“You have to adapt or die,” says Jimereson. And, as was the case at Taco Cat, “Sometimes you adapt and die. It’s not a pleasant experience.”

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CHX



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IV. SURVIVAL OF THE SCRAPPIEST

If Jimerson is right—if this is an extinction-level event for restaurants—that doesn't mean the industry as a whole goes away. What we're left with may be little lizards and small mammals: those tough, quick, or clever enough to make it through and thrive in the new world.

Yeah Yeah Taco was born from this kind of on-the-fly adaptation. The crew behind the “somewhat original” Eat Street flatbread shop Zettas spent about a year planning to open a new cocktail bar in Northeast. But days before signing with their contractor to get the thing rolling for real, COVID hit the state, and they hit the brakes.

Not knowing whether this was going to last a month or a year or five years, Sophia Munch says they decided to terminate their lease. But since they already had the Zettas space, and were comfortable working in a teeny-tiny kitchen, they figured: Why not just do the bar menu that they'd spent so much time and love and energy working on here? Yeah Yeah Taco started as a weekend-only pop-up, but it was such a hit—and so much fun to do—that it eventually became a daily thing.

“I kind of get the sense that for people right now, entertainment options are extremely limited. And I think even before COVID, food was becoming entertainment,” Munch says. Sure, the experience of sitting down and sharing a meal and a bunch of wine with your people might be unavailable to you at the moment, “but people are very excited for new options right now, because it's a new activity, you know? We were like, ‘Cool, let's give them something new to do.’”

This “ghost kitchen” concept—a restaurant within a restaurant—isn't new. Nor are takeout-only eateries or delivery-only eateries, for that matter; Indianapolis-based “ClusterTruck” had a six-month stint in Minneapolis back in 2018, and

Famous Dave's has been pioneering dining-room-free “virtual restaurants” for years.

Historically speaking, they haven't been super successful. ClusterTruck couldn't make it work in Minneapolis or Denver or Cleveland (though six other U.S. locations remain, according to their website). Celeb chef David Chang of Momofuku fame opened and then closed NYC's app-and-web-only Ando, and the list of failed Silicon Valley-backed delivery-only eateries includes Maple, Sprig, Bento, and SpoonRocket.

But maybe they were ahead of their time? Ghost kitchens have caught on quickly in 2020 as sit-down service dwindles and chefs see an opportunity to get creative with takeout. Lake City Sandwiches is up and running out of the Nightingale kitchen on Lyndale; St. Paul's French Hen Cafe now moonlights as Moonflower Pizza. In Uptown, lines extend down the block for folks waiting to try new chicken tender hotspot CHX, a to-go window that operates out of the Pourhouse.

“The idea was, hey, let's use underutilized kitchen space in ZIP codes with high delivery volume, or takeout,” says Frederick Huballa, one of CHX's three founding members. “Let's get brands in there that believe they should be in that area to get people fresh food in a quick time.”

They started kicking around the idea about four years ago, but got working on it in earnest as COVID hit. For Huballa and partners Marques Johnson and Shawn Edward, the idea is that takeout and delivery can be made fresh, and with the same high-quality, local ingredients as you'd get in a sit-down situation. “That's something we feel like is more rare in the fast-casual space,” he says. “If it's not fine dining, it shouldn't lose the ‘fine.’”

Odds are good we'll see more takeout menus emphasizing “fine” the longer the pandemic stretches on. Petite León—the south Minneapolis restaurant from chef-owner Jorge Guzmán (formerly of Surly

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Petite León



ELIESA JOHNSON



Brewer's Table) and co-owner Travis Serbus—was initially envisioned as a sexy, sit-down neighborhood spot. COVID changed “everything.”

“All of it. All of the above,” Guzmán says. “From the website to the layout to the menu to the inventory to our hiring practices.”

“We’ve pivoted and changed our concept already,” adds Serbus. “Jorge’s done, what, 15 menus?”

Instead, they’ll open this weekend with a to-go only menu that includes roasted beets with pilpelchuma, labna, macadamia, and quinoa; lamb meatballs with salsa birria, crema, toasted ajonjolí, and mint; and red chile pozole with heirloom Mexican hominy, chicken confit, and “fixin’s.”

Traditional takeout it ain’t, but they’re working within the constraints of the time. And they’ll have a ghost kitchen here, too: Guzmán’s pop-up concept Pollo Pollo al Carbon will be up and running soon, serving family-style meals of the adobo-rubbed bird, housemade salsas and rubs, and tortillas from Nixta.

Like everything else, it involves constant shifting, reassessing, and pivoting. It means taking a clear-eyed, near-daily look at what’s working and what isn’t.

As Munch at Yeah Yeah Taco says: This is a master puzzle. “We’re all trying to be like, ‘Okay, cool. What’s our piece? Where do we fit in? What can we do? What can we stretch?’ It’s a really beautiful time to be in this industry, where all the normalcy—all the guaranteed ideals of the industry—are gone. I think it shows how creative everybody can really be.”

Her answer for why anyone would do this right now, for the record: “People in the industry are like, insane people,” she laughs. “You’ve gotta be a little crazy to do this. And I think this pandemic situation only shows that to like, the highest degree.”



Chef Jorge Guzmán
at Petite León

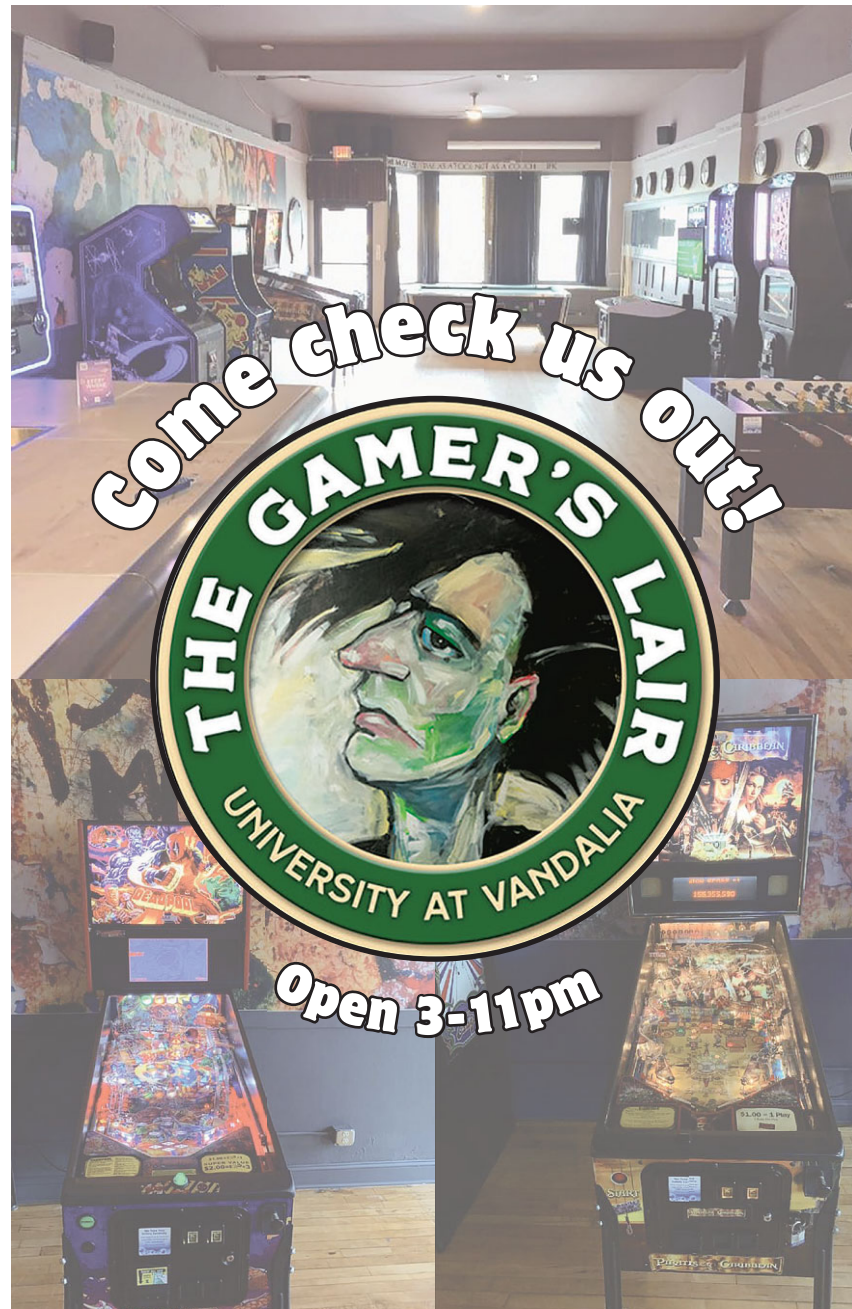
V. BETTER TOGETHER

Dare we allow ourselves another flicker of optimism, this could be an opportunity to change more than the manner in which guests order and eat. It could be a chance to look beyond menu pivots and pop-ups that extends to industry-wide betterment.

One newish shift? A belief that in collaboration, rather than competition is the way to keep the lights on. Yia Vang says Union Hmong Kitchen has benefitted from that spirit of do-it-togetherness—the restaurant was operating out of a trailer at Sociable Cider Werks, and for the winter months, Vang and his Hmong Kitchen menu are moving into Matty O’Reilly’s Republic. (Sammy’s Avenue Eatery will move into the Sociable trailer.)

“That’s a person who’s putting their money where their mouth is, not just saying, ‘Hey, I hope we can all work together, I hope we can get through this.’ It was him saying, ‘I want us to get through this. I want you to get through this. How do we come together?’”

“My hope is that all of these inequities that we’ve been talking about in the



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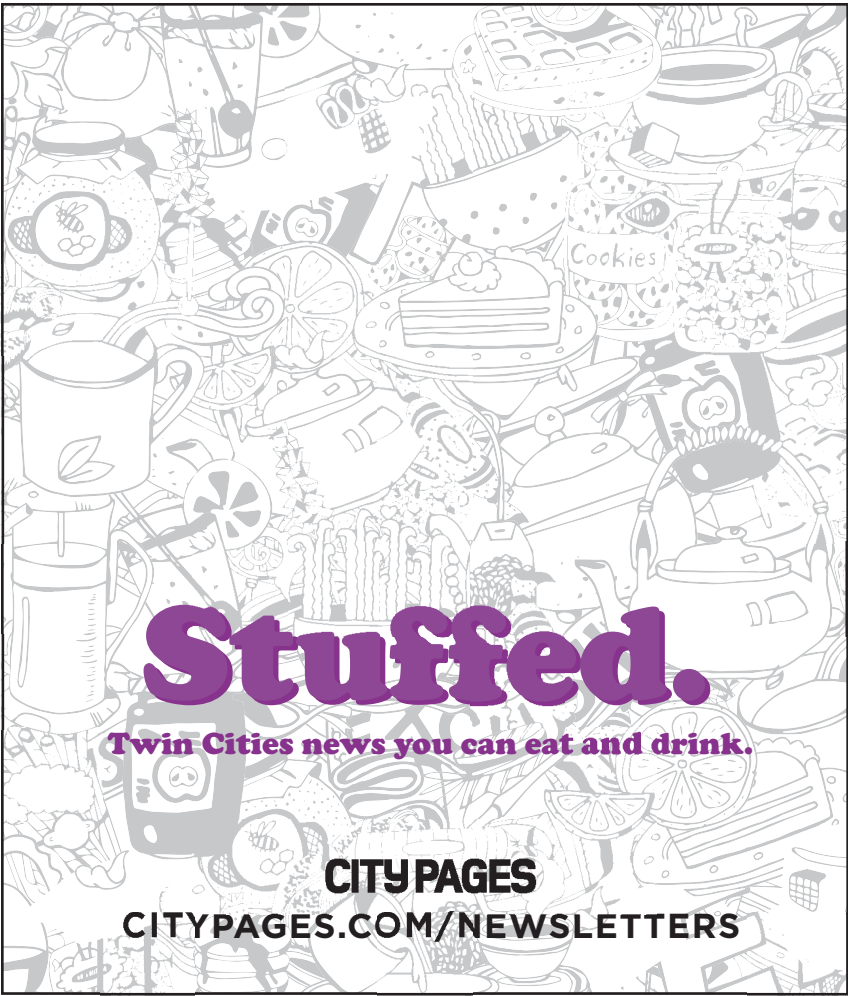
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Chef Yia Vang
at Republic



LAUREN CUTSHALL

restaurant industry for so long and said, ‘Oh we don’t have the time to change it, we don’t have the money to change it’—I’m hoping this at least changes that,” says Jimerson at Taco Cat. He wants to see more employee-owned restaurants, more cooperative restaurants, more small-scale, one-person, “not-in-a-restaurant restaurants.” More things like CHX (and Taco Cat), where someone can open something without saddling themselves with an enormous lease and a ton of debt.

And what about those who don’t own restaurants, but work in them? Jimerson continues: “People see their employees as people that should be grateful because they’re getting paid. That relationship has changed. And is going to continue to change.” (Look at the unionization efforts that rippled through the Twin Cities food and drink industry this summer.)

His prediction is already coming to fruition. At Petite León, there’s an outward goal of creating a good culture. “We’ve been employees, and we’ve been in situations where it’s stressful and it’s daunting and it’s toxic,” Guzmán says. “Part of our process was, we want to have a place where when you come to work, you feel secure and feel safe.”

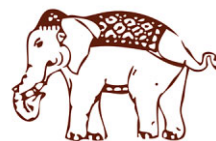
They want to give employees insurance; they plan to implement a 20 percent service charge and eliminate tipping. The hope is to start everyone at \$15 an hour, eventually getting them to \$20.

“I would add that we want our employees to be part of the decision-making process and to have a sense of ownership,” adds León’s Travis Serbus. “This is an experiment, it’s a total work in progress. But we really want to put our employees first.”

And if you’d rather not have a boss? If you decide you are one of the wild ones who wants to become part of this industry’s ongoing puzzle/tapestry/nightmare/community?

“It’s probably going to be one of the best times for a cook to go out and start his own restaurant,” says Serbus, echoing Brian Ingram’s now-or-never take. “Equipment’s gonna be cheap, and property’s gonna be cheap. Landlords are starting to be more reasonable.

“It actually could end up being a very good opportunity for the industry, once we get over this,” he continues. “And once we do, I suspect it’s gonna be like the Roaring Twenties. People are gonna be out. They’re gonna be hungry. The industry will come roaring back.” 



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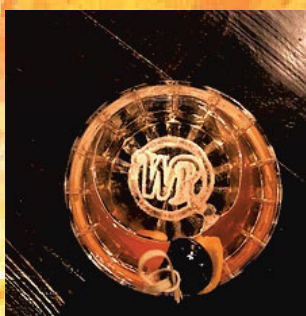
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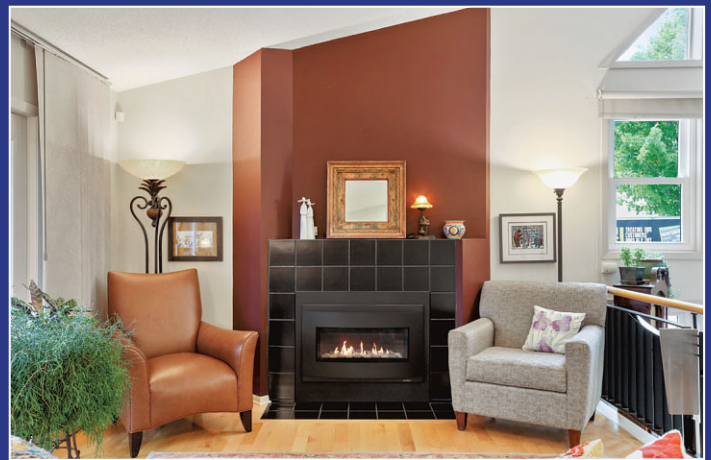


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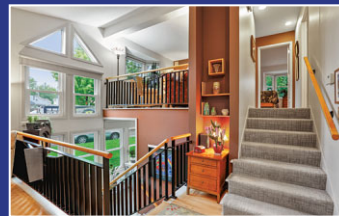
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The Gnome



THE GNOME

What's New

31 restaurants, curbside-pickup spots, and delivery joints that opened since COVID hit

BY EMILY CASSEL

Lots of places have closed since COVID-19 arrived in Minnesota... but a frankly shocking number of new spots have opened, too. (And more are getting announced all the time!)

From takeout tacos to walk-up window chicken tenders to michelada buckets, here are 31 newbies to try.

Surdyk's Sidebar

Consider it a brasserie with a twist. At Surdyk's new sit-down sidebar, you'll find littleneck clams in chili-cilantro broth in an homage to classic Moules Marinière, while steak frites come served with shallot-anchovy butter and a drizzle of Saba (the tangy, balsamic-adjacent Italian condiment). "We're also serving up classic bar fare, because we don't take ourselves too seriously," says catering director Emily Surdyk. "The beer-battered cheese curds with spicy honey are pretty incredible." 303 E. Hennepin Ave. Suite 2, Minneapolis; 612.379.3232, sidebaratsurdyks.com

Bebe Zito

The name—Bebe Zito—is very cute. The logo—a tubby, tattooed tike in a baseball cap holding an ice cream cone—is also very cute. The story—couple stops at the storefront to get promo photos taken before appearing on *Twin Cities Live*, one surprises the other by popping the question right out front, they go on TV and surprise

their friends and fam with the engagement news—I mean... it's enough to melt your heart like so much ice cream. And the flavors are super fun: One's got gochujang in it, another comes with chocolate-covered grasshoppers. (Yes: the bugs.) 704 W. 22nd St., Minneapolis; bebezitomin.com

Young Man

"We'll fight this and do our best to keep the business running... till [we've] passed this pandemic together," Albert Kurniawan told City Pages in May. He and his wife, Zye, have kept that promise so far, serving up explosively fun and flavorful Hawaiianish dishes despite opening about a week before the order that closed Minnesota bars and restaurants. Order the octopus dumplings. 3752 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis; 929-444-2705, youngmanmsp.com

The Gnome

Remember how much of a bummer it was when the Happy Gnome closed last year? Well, ground zero of the Twin Cities' craft beer movement is back—this time as The Gnome. (We're all a little less happy than we were in 2019.) "As soon as I heard the Gnome had closed, I started pursuing it," says new owner Brian Ingram. And the spirit is the same: a low-key pub that serves high-key good food. Take a pull of the Instagram feed: You'll be making a reservation to get carved beef barbacoa



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and bone marrow pot pie after three flicks of the thumb. 498 Selby Ave., St. Paul; 651-219-4233, thegnomepub.com

B.A.D. Wingz

These B.A.D. Wingz are G.O.O.D.A.S.H.E.L.L. Gerard Klass, the flavor genius behind Soul Bowl, is back in new Northeast digs, with another highly customizable menu that lets you pick from about a dozen sauces and rubs and dips and sides and snacks. Boneless or whole? Traditional or Southern fried? Small or large? Never has it been been so easy to have it your way. They've even got plant-based "Wings" for the vegetarian and vegan crowd. 519 Central Ave. NE, Minneapolis; 612 545 5059, badwingz.com

ESB (East Side Bar)

Miss Ward 6? Here's some cool news: The restaurant that helped revitalize Payne Avenue is back! (Kind of!) ESB is in the same location (the former Hamm's brewery), with the same owner (Eric Foster), and some familiar faces (bartender Adam Oberle is back as GM). The menu's all new, but you'll find it's peppered with Ward 6 classics: The reuben! The fish 'n chips! The Ward 6 cocktail! It's a neighborhood pub with great food and local beer—"Plus an exciting mezcal program that comes



from my time living in Oaxaca, Mexico," Foster says. 858 Payne Ave., St. Paul; 651-348-8450, esbstp.com

Billy Sushi

Chef Billy seems like the kind of person you wanna be buddies with. This guy repped the U.S. in the Global Sushi Challenge twice,

founded Sushi Fix and Bibuta (both food trucks so successful they became brick-and-mortars), and used the pun "Sushi a-BILLY-Te" on the website for his new venture. The seasonal sushi at his North Loop namesake includes Silly Billy (spicy tuna and shrimp tempura wrapped with avocado and topped with four kinds of fish) and Mistletoe (soft-shell crab and

spicy tuna topped with tuna, eel, snapper, salmon, avocado, and white tuna). It's extra in a real fun way. 116 N. First Ave., Minneapolis; 612-886-1783, billysushi.net

Heather's

Heather Asbury says you can find a little bit of everything at her cute new Chicago Avenue eatery, which debuted just before Minnesota bars and restaurants had to close down. The longtime Lucia's manager breathed new life into the long-vacant Mario's space, with dishes driven by seasonal produce and a "fluid menu" that changes slightly every day. And speaking of everything, they're open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, for patio dining or to-go via a convenient little walk-up window. 5201 Chicago Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-445-8822, heathersmpls.com

Okome House

Hide Tozawa calls the offerings at Okome House "Japanese comfort food," which feels like a natural fit for the chef who spent years honing Kyatchi's sustainable sushi program. And it truly is a comfort to have Tozawa's onigiri here in town. These rice balls—rice triangles, really—are pockets packed with flavors from tuna mayo to pickled plum. They're filling and fresh and





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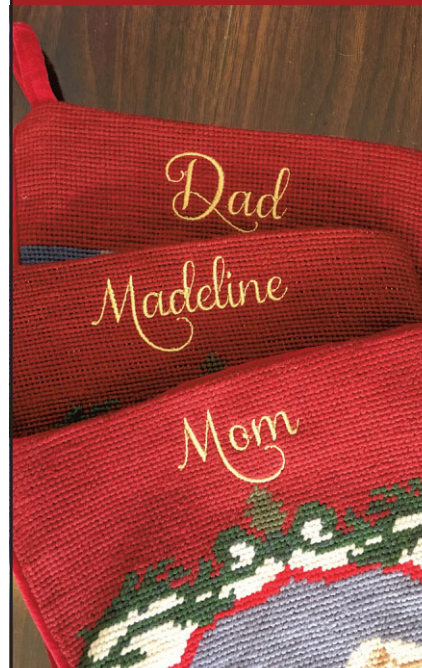
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Casa Maria

The former home of Al Vento (RIP) has burst back to life as Casa Maria, where owners hope to share their Mexican heritage through food. Choose from tacos dished out on hand-pressed corn tortillas, classic dishes from tortas to chimichangas, and an array of seafood from marinated jumbo shrimp to fried whole tilapia. 5001 S. 34th Ave., Minneapolis; 612-200-8368, casamariampls.com

Nixta

Asked what they'd like new customers to know about them, the crew behind Nixta replies: "You can have better tortillas, and we can help with that." The new-to-North-east tortillaria from chef Gustavo Romero specializes in pre-order Mexican dinners and bags of beautiful, perfect, handmade, heirloom corn tortillas—the result of a recipe Romero's been honing for years. For the members of "Team Tortilla," "Our



favorite thing is hearing people make the meal a tradition, and seeing and hearing people's own spin on how to put the food together." 1222 NE Second St., Minneapolis; nixtampls.com

Burger Dive

Like burgers? Like dives? If so, you're in luck! (If not, it's entirely unclear why you're reading City Pages!) The burger bar in

question got its start outta the Tony Jaros River Garden kitchen last year and opened up inside Rosedale Center's Potluck food hall not long after. They dove into West Seventh in August, where they're serving the time-tested triple-B menu: breakfast, brunch, burgers. Sorry, not a lot of seafood, even though it does come from Smack Shack owners Josh Thoma and Kevin Fitzgerald and chef Nick O'Leary... but they do have pull tabs! 731 Randolph Ave.,

St. Paul; 651-294-3240, burgerdivemn.com

Taste of Rondo

What exactly is the taste of St. Paul's Rondo neighborhood? Apparently, it's bar-and-grill burgers-and-more, with a little bit of a Southern twist. Think shrimp etouffee, watermelon panzanella, Cajun catfish, and "Momma's Pot Roast" (available on Sundays only—Momma's got too much stuff to do during the week!). You're probably not flying right now, and Louisiana's a little far to drive. This is the next-best thing. 976 Concordia Ave., St. Paul; 651-348-2615, tasteofrondostp.com.

The Birdhouse

Josh and Nell Currey Dykhuis are a retro duo, so when the husband-wife team behind this Robbinsdale newbie learned the city had its biggest population in 1970, they went full flower power. At the Birdhouse, the decor is delightfully throwback, and on the menu you'll find classic American comfort food—burgers, brats, and curds—all served on vintage stoneware that matches the mood. Well, mostly classic American comfort food: "The chef snuck in some mussels with lardons and salmon salad with yuzu vinaigrette," Josh quips. 4153 West Broadway

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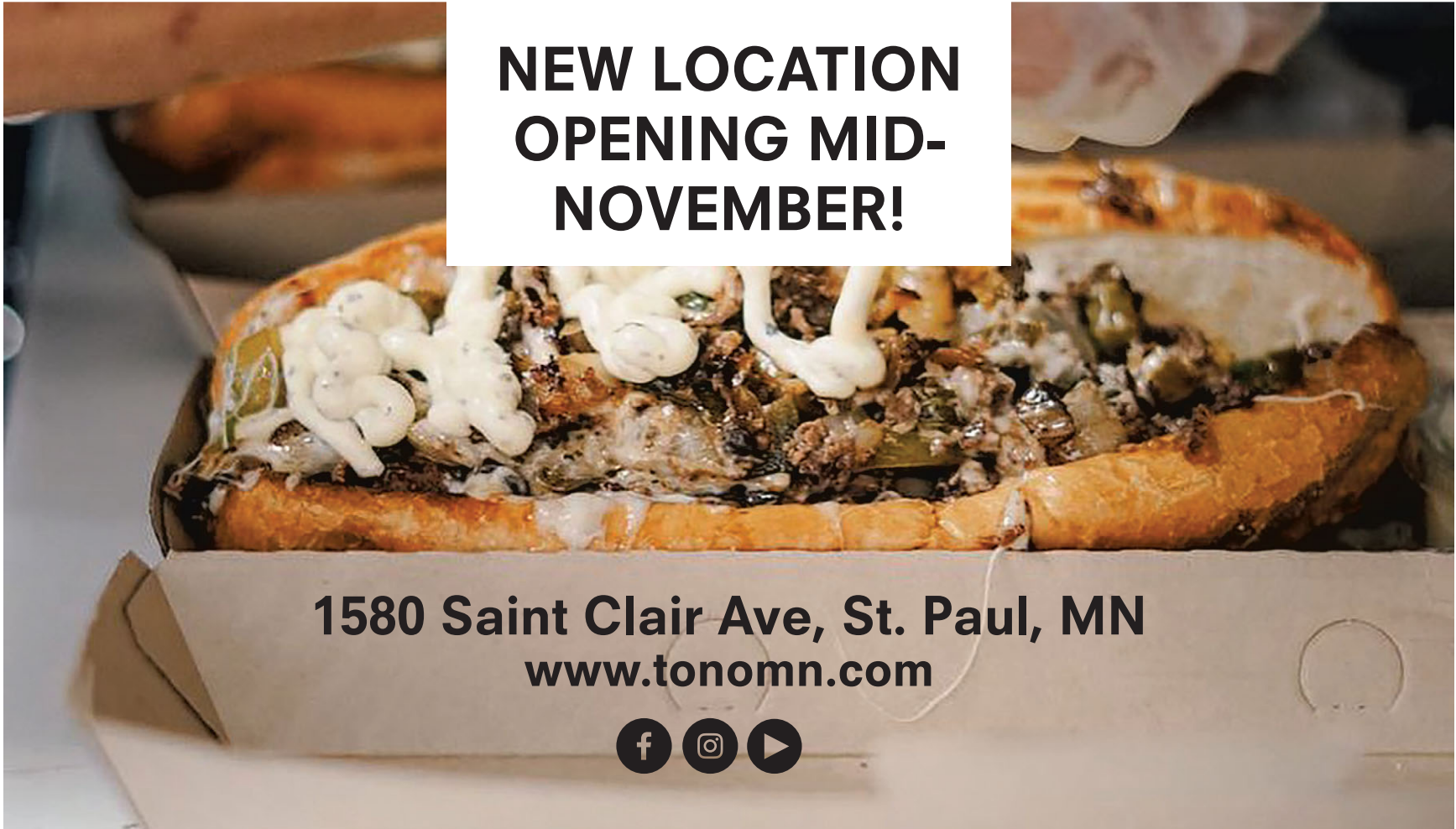
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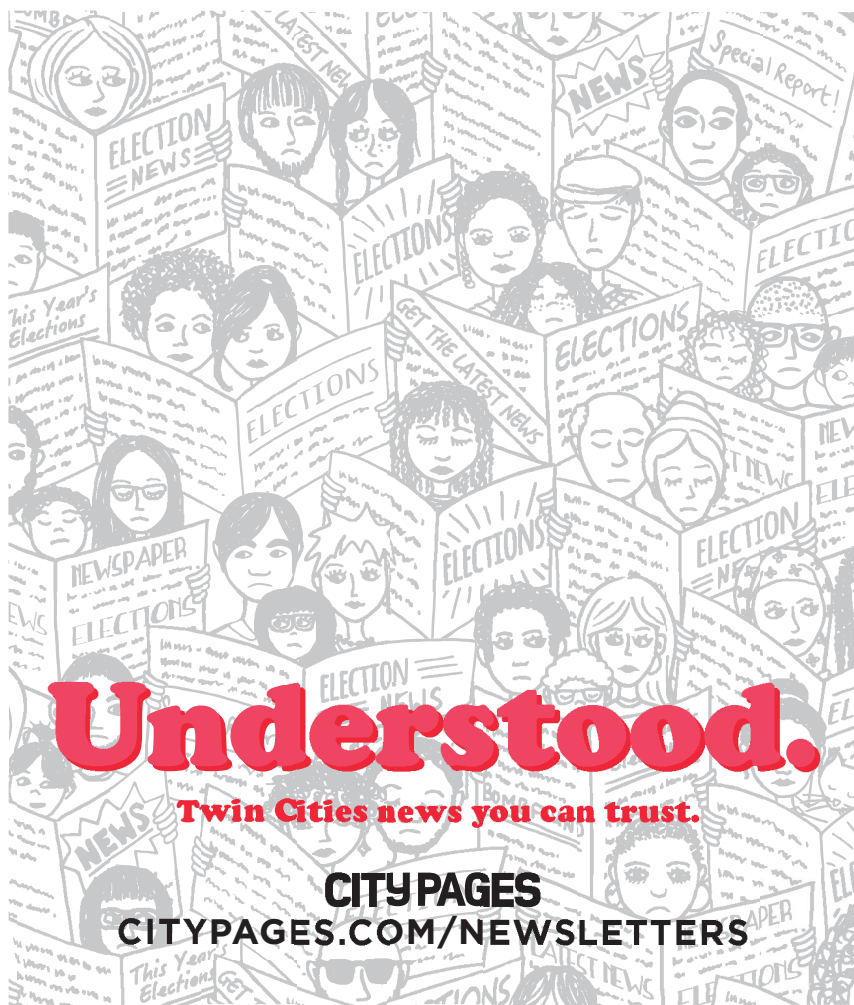
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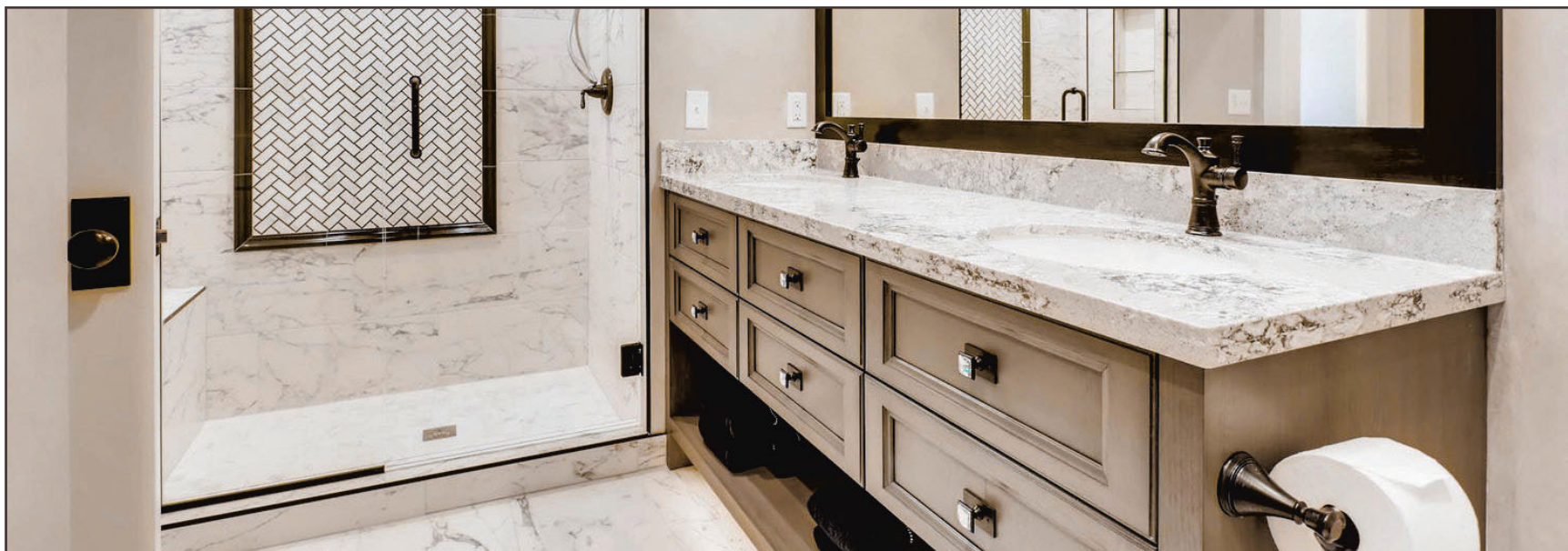
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Yeah Yeah Taco

The team behind Zettas, the sandwich shop that made us realize a person could in fact become fanatical about flatbreads, recently launched Yeah Yeah Taco out of the same small Eat Street footprint. And if you're at all prone to indecision, good friggin' luck choosing between the slow-cooked, tangy, just-spicy Salsa Macha Chicken Taco (Yeah Yeah) and the fluffy, house-made ricotta and dreamy tomato jam and bacon on the Number Six (Zettas). It's so good that Yeah Yeah—which was at first a weekend-only pop-up—is now a six-day-a-week affair. 2424 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis; 763-310-2136, yeahyehtaco.com

Wendy's House of Soul

You think you've had a rough year? Wendy Puckett was shot in the face with a pellet gun, then lost her lease in north Minneapolis, and is, like all restaurant owners, trying to navigate a pandemic. And still, there's a little bit of soul in everything chef Puckett makes, from the crispy-crunchy tots dusted in soul seasoning to the SoulRolls—eggroll-wrapped, deep-fried creations that ya just gotta try. Do that at the new Wendy's House of Soul in Minneapolis's Harrison neighborhood, which opened up last month. 1825 Glenwood Ave., Minneapolis; 612-800-4535, youvebeensouled.com

CHX

These tendies are the real deal, y'all. The Twin Cities-raised trio of Frederick

Huballa, Shawn Edwards, and Marques Johnson thought we needed a to-go joint specializing in fried chicken and biscuits that also prioritized local ingredients. And it sure looks like they were right: The line at CHX (which operates out of the Pourhouse kitchen in Uptown) sometimes stretches down the block as folks fiend over the kickass, crispy tenders, crinkle-cut fries, and show-stealing biscuits from Penny's Coffee pastry chef Shawn McKenzie. 2923 Girard Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-759-1787, chxmsp.com

Lake City Sandwiches

Another in the g-g-g-ghost kitchen trend, Lake City Sandwiches operates out of the Nightingale building on Lyndale. From 11 a.m. to midnight daily, Lake City serves up sammies both hot and cold, all on house-made focaccia. Nightingale and Lake City chef-owner Carrie McCabe-Johnston says that right now she's crazy about the mushroom sandwich: roasted shrooms, chopped giardiniera, and fermented cashew paste. Basically: "I took the flavors of a mufuletta and made it vegan." But the most popular is the porchetta—that's the one that started the business in the first place. 2551 Lyndale Ave. S., Minneapolis; lakecitysandwiches.com

Rosalia Pizza

Sometimes, we dream of perfect pepperoni cups. The crispy crunch of those little edges. The tiny pools of grease. The salty, savory bliss of it all. The new pizza shop from Martina and Colita's Daniel del Prado trades in these platonic-ideal pep discs, plus a selection of Argentinian-style pizza (fugazza) and small plates. You can

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Nashville Coop

Some like it hot. Nashville Coop likes it scorching. The food-truck-turned-brick-and-mortar landed in St. Paul in September, and folks have been flocking to get their hands on these strips and sammiches since. The chicken is crispy, juicy, and streamlined—we've gotta guess the small menu helps brothers Kamal and Arif Mohamed pack the heat into truly tear-inducing concentrations. (Yes, there is a not-hot MN Nice option if you've got tender taste buds.) 300 Snelling Ave., St. Paul; nashvillecoop.com

Woodfired Cantina

If we had to pick the most beautiful combination of four words possible, "micheladas

by the bucket" might be it. This newbie in St. Paul's Keg and Case Market has 'em, customizable by style (jalapeño shrimp, chili lime, "Woodfired special") and beer (Corona, Modelo, Pacifico). There's also a whole-ass lunch, brunch, and dinner menu that'll take you from tacos (2 for \$9) alllll the way to a 30-ounce El Jefe Tomahawk (\$99). 928 Seventh St. W., St. Paul; 651-999-3959, woodfiredcantina.com

Bricksworth Beer Co.

Burnsville's newest brewery is actually Burnsville's newest pizzeria—at least for now. But check it out: The pizzas here (a little Detroit pan, a little Chicago deep dish, and a dash of Minnesota bar pie) are being made by Angelo Pennacchio, who helmed dearly departed CP fav Bar Luchador before the pandemic hit. The owner is Cooper Johnson, whose parents own BlackStack Brewing, and Bricksworth's head brewer, Steve Snyder, comes by way of Fair State. In other words, though the brewery is only open for takeout pies and wings until the licensing goes through, it's a pedigreed place... get those weekend pizza pre-orders in now before the beer starts flowing in earnest. 12257 Nicollet Ave., Suite B, Burnsville; bricksworth.square.site

Breizh Crêperie

Would you have guessed that crepes and cider are as natural a pairing as peanut butter and jelly, or milk and Oreos? Apparently they are—at least in France's Brittany region. "When we eat crepes we don't drink wine or beer—we drink cider," Breizh Crêperie's Claire Corvaisier, a Brittany native, told us earlier this month. Now you can, too, thanks to her new crêperie nestled inside Minneapolis Cider



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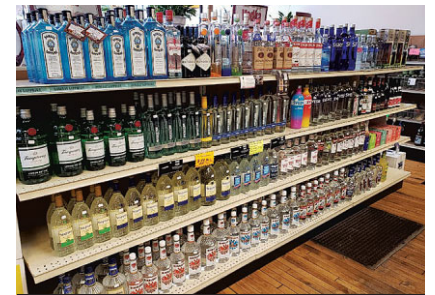
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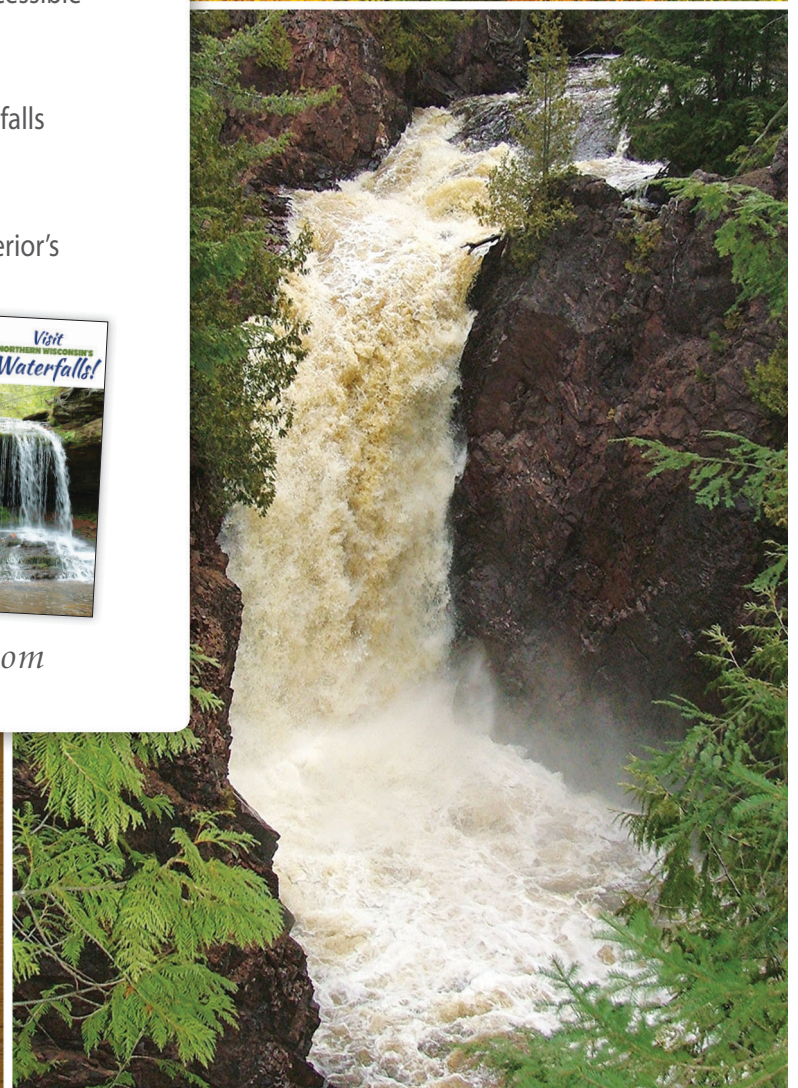
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you think, “Hmm, I did eat pizza three times already this week.” We're not saying we've done this, per se, but uh... for those who have, Pyramid lets you pivot, too. 2329 Hennepin Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-377-3422, pyramidpizzamn.com

Pillbox Tavern

St. Paul's Pillbox takes its name from the turn-of-the-century stadium where the Saints played baseball. But this is more of a take-me-out-to-the-puck-game situation: It's located in the same building as The Wild's practice facility. Unfortunately there's nothing on the menu by the name of “Zamboni Burger,” but they do have a trio of juicy lucys, and if you're looking for a way to invoke a third sport, they've got football brunch from 10-3 on Sundays. (Sorry in advance about the Vikes.) 400 Wabasha St. N. #220, St. Paul; 651-756-7566, pillboxtav.com

Petite León

James Beard Award honoree Jorge Guzmán—who made his mark on Minneapolis at the too-short-lived Surly Brewer's Table—is back, this time in the former Blackbird space in Minneapolis's Kingfield neighborhood. Petite León opens this weekend, takeout-only, with a menu of

tastebud treats tailored to-go that includes lamb meatballs, red chile pozole, and a truly sinful-looking double cheeseburger. And it comes with a little bird bonus, too: Pollo Pollo al Carbon, Guzmán's family-style adobo-chicken concept, will also operate outta the Lion's den. 3800 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis; petiteleonmpls.com

Moonflower Pizza

French Hen's breakfast-and-lunch operation recently added a nighttime sibling. Moonflower's a carry-out-only, alley-pickup sort of pizza speakeasy. (Speakcheesy?) And the menu boasts showstopping specialty pizzas like Le Frenchie (cream, brie, sausage, caramelized onions, thyme, and pecorino crumbles) alongside staples like cheese, veggie, and a Margherita. There's a vegan pie, too! It's open 5 to 9 p.m., Thursday to Sunday... but if this little moonflower blossomed into some sort of all-day, every day situation, we'd in no way complain. 518 Selby Ave., St. Paul; 651-222-6201, frenchhencafe.com/moonflower-pizza

Bellecour Bakery

Gavin Kaysen made the call to close Bellecour's Wayzata bistro and bakery in July, but the latter of the two has risen again—

not unlike the dough in pastry boss Diane Moua's dreamy kouign-amann. Bellecour Bakery at Cooks now operates out of the Cooks of Crocus Hill space in the North Loop (right across from chef Kaysen's other eatery, Spoon and Stable). Here, you can snag Moua-made croissants, breads, cookies, and crepe cake, from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. 210 N. First St., Minneapolis; bellecourbakery.com

Good Times Pizza

Good Times saw some historically Bad Times before opening earlier this year. Between lagging HVAC repairs and a serial window-smasher who wouldn't leave the place alone, it took Franz Gilbertson two additional years to open. And when the bar-pie pizzeria finally did open, in February, it was only to face down a pandemic a month later. “I had really envisioned Good Times being a lot more of a neighborhood watering hole that also happened to make these style pizzas—incidentally, you know?” he told us earlier this month. Luckily, those crispy, perfect pizzas are well worth taking out... and we might just have a very cool neighborhood watering hole to look forward to down the line. 322 W. 38th St., Minneapolis; 612-354-3589, goodtimespizzamnpls.com



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BY JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

The presidential election is about a week away. Are you scared yet? Let's pass the time with something less terrifying: Halloween. Also this week? Mia's "Foot in the Door" is back after 10 years.

Twin Cities Horror Fest

Now in its ninth year, the Twin Cities Horror Festival has grown exponentially in popularity each season, bringing theatergoers a variety of scares ranging from subtle, psychological productions to full-on bloodbaths. This year, despite the horrors of 2020, the show will go on... on YouTube Live. "Moving the festival online comes with a set of new challenges," says co-artistic director Nissa Nordland. "With the virtual medium, we constantly evaluate how to make a terrifying experience translate through the screen. How do we scare you from the safety of your own couch?"

You'll be able to discover how they answered these questions this week when a total of five new works premiere over the course of three evenings. The roster includes a reading of *The Retelling*, a work-in-progress musical slated to fully launch at the 2021 festival. Winding Sheet Outfit's *When Your Love Sets You On Fire* tells the true tale of Bridget Cleary, "a victim of the last witch burning in Ireland." There's also a ghastly cabaret hosted by Leslie Vincent, an anthology of short horror flicks ranging in content from campy to creepy, and *Confirmation Bias*, a psychological horror story starring Lauren Anderson and Heather Meyer.

As for tickets, the event is moving to a pay-as-able model. "We chose a 'PWYC' model to reduce barriers and increase access to our online platform," says Ryan Lear, executive director at TCHF. "With this model, 80 percent of festival ticket and pass sales will go directly to the producing artists creating this unique work." Any donation gets you access, but the suggested rates are \$15 per show, \$55 for the evening, and \$120 for an all-weekend pass. You can throw them a bone and find more details over at tchhorrorfestival.com. 6 p.m. to midnight each evening. **October 29-31**

THIS IS HALLOWEEN

There are plenty of spooks and spectres in town this week



GETTY

JXTA Jack-O-Lantern Plaza Takeover

Normally, Juxtaposition Arts' outdoor plaza is a play area for skateboarders and graffiti artists. This Friday, however, the organization will be turning it into a celebration of art, with pumpkins as the canvas. Folks will bring their original creations to the square to be judged for a chance to win cash prizes. Pumpkins can be carved or painted, and will be on display at the party. Masks are required, obviously, and there will be candy and other treats. You'll need to sign up to submit a Jack-o-Lantern, and this party is limited to 30 people at a time to ensure safety. Register at juxtapositionarts.org. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Free. Juxtaposition Arts, 2007 Emerson Ave. N., Minneapolis. **October 30**

Dark Fatha Release Party

Barhopping in big crowds just isn't going to be a thing this year. There is, however, some fun to be had, including Bent Brewstillery's Halloween-themed beer party. Dark Fatha is a limited-quantity American imperial stout, aged in bourbon barrels, that the Roseville brewpub/distillery serves on special occasions. Try it this Saturday, or opt to travel through history by ordering a flight that features Dark Fatha varieties from 2017, 2018, and 2019. Also on tap will be the 2020 version of the Brewer's Reserve Dark Fatha, made with macadamia nuts

and toasted pecans, and aged in a barrel for 10 years. If you're more of a cocktail person, try the Fatha's old fashioned, or a drink made with J.A. V, a locally made beet sugar vodka. Show up in your finest Halloween garb if you're inclined to do so; a costume contest starts up around 8 p.m. Free. Noon to midnight. Bent Brewstillery, 1744 Terrace Dr., Roseville. **October 31**

Howl-o-Ween

You may feel too old to dress up for Halloween, but your dog never is. See this principle in action at Sociable Cider Werk's canine-themed party for All Hallow's Eve. So put the taco, Batman, or mermaid costume on your pup, and head out for a pint. The (mask wearing, socially distant) crowd promises to be cute AF, with bartenders judging the top looks for prize packages. Oh, and no worries if you want to dress up, too: Humans are encouraged to celebrate the holiday, even if there will be no people prizes awarded today. Be sure to check in with staff by 2:45 p.m. to participate. Free. 1 to 3 p.m. Sociable Cider Werks, 1500 Fillmore St. NE, Minneapolis. **October 31**

Foot in the Door 5: The Virtual Exhibition

In 1980, the Minneapolis Artist Exhibition Program (MAEP) decided to organize the first "Foot in the Door" show at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. The criteria to submit work were simple: The maker had to be local, and the piece could be no bigger than one cubic foot. The inaugural show was a hit, featuring 740 artists.

Since then, this event has been a once-a-decade opportunity that has grown exponentially. The most recent show, in 2010, featured nearly 5,000 works. Expect a similar turnout in 2020, with media in every shape and form. That includes paintings, photography, sculpture, video work, and installation—all adhering to that 1' by 1'/one cubic foot rule.

There is, however, one major change this year: "Foot in the Door," which typically boasts gallery walls filled within an inch of their lives, is moving to the virtual realm in 2020. Still, this is a rare chance to see what creatives are up to right now in Minnesota. You can find more info at new.artsmia.org. **November 1 through January 10**



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STAR TRIBUNE

THOUGHT CONTROL

The Roots' Black Thought doomscreens through history on *Streams of Thought, Vol. 3*

BY KEITH HARRIS

How many 47-year-old rappers can you say are rhyming better than ever?

Theoretically, rap is a craft that an MC can hone over the course of a lifetime. In practice, different skills are celebrated in different eras, and what sounds exhilarating one moment soon becomes mockably dated. This can have as much to do with capital as it does art—fashion masquerading as avant-gardism—and the need for younger rhymers to prove their elders obsolete. Whether in anticipation or response to this, classicists overestimate the value of older approaches to the form and seek to preserve them. The upshot is that styles are either discarded or calcified before they're fully explored.

At its best, the latest EP from Black Thought, *Streams of Thought Vol. 3: Cane and Able EP*, sidesteps this dilemma. As the MC for the Roots, the man born Tariq Trotter has occupied an unusual position in

rap. We expect the MC to claim top billing and fight off all comers, but Thought has been, by necessity and perhaps by nature, a team player, adapting his gifts to whatever concept his band is exploring and ceding the spotlight to Questlove, the showman of the group, its leader and fulcrum. As a result, Black Thought has sometimes been slightly under-noticed (a strange thing to say about a guy who appears on *The Tonight Show*) and, consequently, his skills have sometimes been slightly overrated by his defenders.

I mention Trotter's rep not because it's as important an issue as the online hip-hop fans who compulsively debate GOAT lists insist, but to show why he can sidestep the problems facing many rap elders. Unlike other middle-aged MCs, he doesn't have to compete with his own legacy, and he's not defined by a particular era that he dominated. He has no *Reasonable Doubt* or *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*

to compete against in the present.

And though plenty aggressive on the mic, Thought's still a reluctant star. A debut solo album was scrapped in 2001, its tracks integrated into the Roots' *Phrenology*. A later collaboration with Danger Mouse was shelved, and other projects have been rumored over the years. Then a 10-minute freestyle on Funkmaster Flex's Hot 97 show in late 2017 unexpectedly went viral, and so he's stepped out solo over the past few years—though “eased out” might be a better way to put it. His 2018 EP *Streams of Thought, Vol. 1* was, at 17 minutes, not even twice as long as the freestyle, and its title flaunted its improvisatory shapelessness; he followed it up later that year with *Streams of Thought, Vol. 2*—just 23 minutes.

If its predecessors seemed to be testing the waters without making too many waves, *Streams of Thought Vol. 3: Cane and Able* arrives with some anticipation, and demonstrates slightly more ambition. As with the earlier volumes, Thought entrusts the beats to a single producer. (That seems in character as well, placing himself at the mercy of an individual.) 9th Wonder helmed *Vol. 1*, Salaam Remi its sequel, and, in this case, Sean C, who made his name with Puffy's Hitmen, takes the reins. At 34 minutes, *Vol. 3* is the longest in the series, and it's also the most fleshed out of the three.

That's for better and worse. *Vol. 3* begins with Thought's voice ominously down-pitched, the resulting baritone recalling both Houston screw music and George Clinton's spoken intro on “Maggot Brain,” a resemblance underlined by some heavy Funkadelic guitar from Andy Attanasio, as Native American activist/songwriter John Trudell quietly skewers Columbus's inhuman ideology. Three tracks feature occasionally enticing, occasionally distracting hooks from Portugal The Man. And the paradox of Black Thought, who has always rhymed like a loner in the midst of a crowd, comes to the fore on “Good Morning,” where he tag-teams with Pusha T and Killer Mike while Swizz Beatz adds a chorus, and when Schoolboy Q appears on “Steak Um.”

But regardless of guest features or adornments, the focus remains on the individual skills of the man who declares, “If I'm a walking institution, I'm an HBCU.” He balances rap-for-rap's-sake virtuosity and politically engaged topicality, whether dexterously stringing together resonant “or” sounds on a line like “But historically, the authorities been morally bankrupt” or catching you up short with a simple “What's the worst they can do to you? I bet my mama know.”

The EP builds up to “Thought vs. Everybody,” a three-minute showcase of the best Black Thought has to offer. He declares himself “half Masta Killa and half Hugh Masekela” and leaves the ignorant to Google for knowledge, and seeks wisdom in aphorisms like “life is like a tree that falls/In the woods, even with iPhone footage to see it.” He darts between present and future, enacting the illusion of spontaneity, as though compulsively doomscreening through history. Yet no matter how frantic his flow it retains a nimble grace; no matter how dark his subject he illuminates it with his technique. In these rhymes, art emerges as an insufficient form of reparations for centuries of horror that haven't yet ended, but also a form of defiance.

Today's trap favors an often-spare style, accentuating rhythm, flow, and space over wordplay, and in this context, virtuoso lyricism like Thought's can be embarrassing because it flourishes a mess of excess. Look, I fully acknowledge that there's nothing remarkable about a middle-aged white guy getting excited by the work of middle-aged rappers, just as there's nothing remarkable about younger music fans putting their elders out to pasture. But I also believe that some battles don't need to be fought. **C+**

FREE WILL ASTROLOGY

>> By Rob Breznyn

♈ ARIES (March 21-April 19): Reed Galen is an American political consultant who has worked long and hard for conservative causes. But in next week's election, he opposes conservative Donald Trump, whom he regards as an authoritarian tyrant. He writes, "Democracy is on the ballot. It's a binary choice between good/bad, honorable/dishonorable, healthy/sick, forward/backward. There has been nothing like this in our lifetimes." If you've read my words for a while, you know I'm a connoisseur of ambiguity and uncertainty. I try to see all sides of every story. But now I'm departing from my tradition: I agree with Reed Galen's assessment. The American electorate really does face a binary choice between good and bad. I also suspect, Aries, that you may be dealing with a binary choice in your personal life. Don't underestimate how important it is that you side with the forces of good.

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Taurus politician Dan Coats has belonged to the conservative Republican Party all his adult life. He served in the US Congress for 24 years, and later as President Donald Trump's Director of National Intelligence. Since leaving that office, Coats has criticized his ex-boss. He has said, "Trump doesn't know the difference between the truth and a lie." In accordance with astrological omens, I urge you to be fiercely non-Trump-like in the coming weeks. It's crucial to the welfare of you and yours that you tell the whole truth.

♊ GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Many stories that were popular long ago are still studied today. One example is the ancient Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, originally told during the first century BC. Another is Homer's epic tale the Odyssey, which harkens back to the sixth century BC. I have no problem with learning from old tales like these. It's important to know how people of previous eras experienced life. But for you in the coming months, I think it will be crucial to find and tell new stories--tales that illuminate the unique circumstances that you are living through right now.

♋ CANCER (June 21-July 22): I'm surprised when I hear that fans of Donald Trump enjoy my horoscopes. My political views, which are deeply aligned with my spiritual philosophy, have always been very progressive. And I've never hidden that fact. How can someone who appreciates my ideas also like Trump, a vile bully who has unleashed enormous cruelty and chaos? If you yourself are a Trump fan, I understand that after reading the preceding words, you may never read my words again. But I need to follow my own astrological advice for us Cancerians, which is: Be bold and clear in expressing your devotion to the ideals you hold precious. For me that means supporting Joe Biden, an imperfect candidate who will nevertheless be a far more compassionate and intelligent and fair-minded leader than Trump.

♌ LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Dionysus was the ancient Greek god of drunkenness and ecstasy and madness. His followers were inclined to immerse themselves in those states. Yet as historian Robert Parker points out, Dionysus himself "was seldom drunk, seldom mad." His relationship with his consort Ariadne was "dignified and restrained," and "smiling tranquility" was his common mood. I recommend that in the coming weeks you act more like Dionysus than his followers--no matter how unruly the world around you may become. The rest of us need you to be a bastion of calmness and strength.

♍ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Virgo military expert Jim Mattis enlisted in the US Marine Corps when he was 19 years old. Forty-three years later, having been a Marine all his adult life and a general for six years, he retired. Later, he served under President Donald Trump as the US Secretary of Defense. After leaving that position, Mattis testified that Trump was "dangerous" and "unfit," adding that Trump "has no moral compass." Be inspired by Mattis, Virgo. Do your part to resist the harmful and unethical actions of powerful people who affect you. Be extra strong and clear in standing up for integrity.

♎ LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): "Feeling too much is a hell of a lot better than feeling nothing," declares Libran author Nora Roberts. I trust you will see the wisdom of that perspective in the coming weeks. On the downside, there might be some prickly, disorienting feelings arriving along with the rich flood of splendor. But I'm convinced that most of the surge will be interesting, invigorating, and restorative--although it may take a while for the full effects to ripen. And even the prickly, disorienting stuff may ultimately turn out to be unexpectedly nurturing for your soul.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Scorpio politician Joe Biden wasn't my first choice for President of the United States. During the selection process, I championed his opponents Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders. But now I support Biden wholeheartedly. He has several policies I don't agree with, but on the other hand I know it's critical that we Americans ensure he replaces the appalling, corrupt, incompetent Trump. In the coming days, I advise you Scorpios to also consider the value of wise and pragmatic compromise in your own sphere. Don't allow a longing for impossible perfection to derail your commitment to doing what's right.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): The United States has suffered terribly from COVID-19. Of all the world's countries, it has had more cases and more deaths. Why? One major reason is President Donald Trump. He has consistently downplayed the seriousness of the disease, has advocated many unscientific cures, and has been lax and erratic in supporting the therapeutic measures that virtually all epidemiological experts have recommended. It's no exaggeration to assert that Americans will reduce their coronavirus misery by electing Joe Biden as president. In this spirit, and in accordance with astrological omens, I invite you to meditate on how you could reduce any and all of your own personal suffering. The time is right. Be ingenious! Be proactive!

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): "By my love and hope I beseech you," pleaded philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. "Do not cast away the hero in your soul! Hold holy your highest hope!" That's always good advice, but it's extra crucial for you now. You will generate good fortune for yourself by being in close connection with the part of you that is bravest and wisest. The people whose lives you touch will have a special need for you to express the vitalizing power of intelligent hopefulness. More than maybe ever before, you will be inspired to cultivate your heroic qualities.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): I've been writing my horoscope column for a long time, and it has evolved dramatically. One aspect that hasn't changed is that every four years, I've endorsed a candidate for the president of my home country, the United States. Another unchanging aspect is that I regularly reveal my progressive views about political matters. Some people who have only recently discovered my writing express dismay about this. "I don't want politics with my horoscopes!" they complain. But the fact is, politics have permeated my horoscopes since the beginning. Now I urge you to do what I just did, Aquarius, but in your own sphere: If there are people who are not clear about who you really are, educate them.

♓ PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): "The worse the state of the world grows, the more intensely I try for inner perfection and power," wrote Piscean author Anais Nin during World War II. "I fight for a small world of humanity and tenderness." I encourage you to adopt that perspective for the rest of 2020. It's an excellent time to respond boldly to the outer chaos by building up your inner beauty. I also suggest this addition to Nir's formula: Call on your resourceful compassion to bolster the resilience of your closest allies.

freewillastrology@freewillastrology.com

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SMALL CHANGE

BY BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY

Across

- 1 "Lay All Your Love On Me" group
5 "Breaking Bad" actress Gunn
9 Canvas sneaker brand
13 Shared funds
14 "To say the ____..."
16 Supermodel who runs the annual Fashion Without Limits competition
17 Seep (out)
18 Bobby who won the Indianapolis 500 in three different decades
19 Feature of lo-fi sound
20 Closest star to our sun
23 "Cuomo Prime Time" channel
24 Bubble up?
28 With 45-Across, see the course of action all the way through, and a hint for this puzzle

- 34 ____ favor
35 Pied-à-____
36 Post-championship events, sometimes
37 Clean Air Act administrators: Abbr.
38 "Star Wars" character who asks "Aren't you a little short for a storm trooper?"
39 Participants in some slams
40 Tiny bits of energy
41 Trippy sheets
42 Shavetail, in slang
43 Timed to a T

- 44 Weenie
45 See 28-Across
47 Opening band's allotment
49 Close friend
50 Beater or seeker, e.g.
57 Ehud's successor, fondly
60 Make use (of)
61 Ultraviolence
62 Sign up
63 Make a bust?
64 On par with
65 Done for
66 Coloring agents
67 Brace on the farm

Down

- 1 Each
2 Unsophisticated slob
3 Nincom
4 Manager of the 2018 World Series-winning Red Sox
5 Certain college booster
6 First name in German New Wave
7 Just developing
8 Floating in the ocean
9 Fermented milk drink
10 It doesn't fly in Australia
11 Buffer between army forces: Abbr.
12 Speaks sloppily?
15 Classless individuals
21 Subject heading
22 Spanish kings
25 Quick impression
26 Goose and Maverick's story

- 27 Wiped out
28 "I guess that's fine"
29 "Honest Thief" star
30 Kids' art displayer
31 Logician's project
32 Cow, goat, sheep, etc., follower
33 Observant person
39 Ottawa chief whose name was used by a car company
40 Little Boy carrier
42 Made some inventions
43 October birthstone
46 Picked things
48 Cephalopod's squirting
51 Spot in the man cave?
52 Grant of Hollywood
53 Busy bee's spot
54 She's an Ono
55 He coached opposite Frank in the 2020 NBA finals
56 Superstar chef Redzepi
57 Costco rival
58 Busted person's promise
59 Recyclable container?

Last Week's Answer

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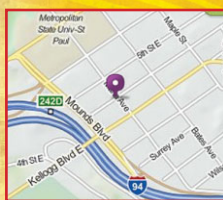


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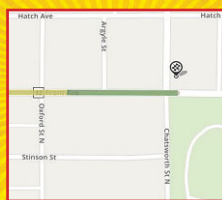
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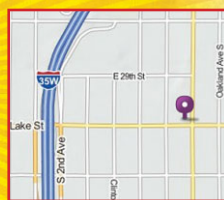
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SAVAGE LOVE

Jealous Typologies

Am I too untrusting for this to work?

I've been in a relationship with a wonderful guy for the past year. The only problem is he works with a girl he used to fuck. It wasn't just sex—they would go on dates and even went on vacation together. He kept this little "detail" to himself for six months before giving himself away by mistake. He apologized, said he hadn't told me so that I wouldn't worry for no reason, and said he no longer has feelings for her.

Disclaimer: I'm an extremely jealous person with huge trust issues, so knowing he kept all this from me is devastating. I no longer trust him. Just thinking that he's seeing—on a daily basis—a woman he used to sleep with is driving me nuts! I repeatedly asked him to let me meet her, at the very least, but it didn't happen. So one night, after giving him a heads-up, I showed up at their workplace. He had said it would be OK for me to stop by sometime but once I got there he freaked out and accused me of not trusting him! Am I being crazy and overreacting or is he acting like an asshole with something to hide? I've been struggling to curb my anxiety, and I've even had a few panic attacks he's not aware of. Him changing jobs is out of the question.

I'M TERRIFIED ABOUT LOSING
IT AND NUKING EVERYTHING

How long were you dating this guy before you outed yourself as an extremely jealous person (EJP)?

I'm guessing at least a few weeks, ITALIANE, if not a few months. Because as you're no doubt aware—as all EJPs are aware—it's not a desirable trait, which is why very few disclose on the first date. ("I grew up in Milan, I have two sisters, and I'm the type of person who'll show up at your workplace and cause a huge scene if I think you might be fucking someone else.") If you're anything like EJPs I've dated and dumped, you didn't show your boyfriend this side of yourself until long after he'd developed feelings for you, making it harder—by design—for him to end things.

I'm gonna go out on a limb and guess he found out his new girlfriend is an EJP before you found out your boyfriend works with a woman he used to fuck. At some point

before the six-month mark, you blew up at him about a waitress or someone he follows on Instagram. And at that moment he realized he couldn't tell you he works with a woman he used to fuck. Because now he feared—knew—you would lose your EJP shit over it because he'd seen you lose it over far less.

The only thing more exhausting than being with an EJP is dealing with one who resents you for hiding something from them that would set them off for days or months. I get it: *He kept this from*

you. But if the last six months (!) are proof of anything, ITALIANE, they're proof your boyfriend was right to keep this from you. Since changing jobs isn't an option and he can't jump in a time machine and go unfuck this woman, what other option did he have? Given a choice between telling you and spending the next six months dealing with your bullshit or keeping his mouth shut and hoping you never found out, he chose the path of least bullshit.

If you can't see how your own behavior may have contributed to his omission—if you can't forgive him and can't take, "No, I'm not fucking her now," for an answer—do your boyfriend a favor and dump him. If you don't and if you keep this shit up, saying you can't trust him one minute and then complaining about him accusing you of not trusting him the next, be prepared to have your ass dumped. There's only so long a person, guilty or not, will put up with an EJP's bullshit.

Finally: Your boyfriend was under no obligation to disclose the current location of every girl he'd ever fucked. While some people can be open with their partners about their pasts, it's not compulsory. And it's not a good idea if someone is trying to make it work with an EJP. I don't know why anyone would want to make it work with an EJP, but there are people out there who do.

Your boyfriend might be one of them. But don't push your luck.

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Dan Savage

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